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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



KEITH CREAGH
DIRECTOR

SUBMITTED: June 15, 2015

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Subject: Pierce Road Unit Special Hunt Opportunities at the Sharonville State Game Area
Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 7 of 2015
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Authority:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and the Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.

Discussion and Background:

The Department of Natural Resources recommends establishing a restricted access hunt area in order to provide special hunt opportunities within the Pierce Road Unit of the Sharonville State Game Area. This hunt will give hunters with disabilities, as defined in the order, the opportunity to hunt deer on state land without competition from other hunters and allow Michigan's deer resources to be more accessible to hunters with disabilities.

According to the Michigan Deer Harvest Survey Report, hunters with disabilities are, generally, some of the least satisfied hunters in Michigan. Although efforts have been made over the last decade to establish special hunt dates, equipment permits, and accessibility provisions, the success rate for hunters with disabilities continues to remain low compared to other hunters.

About 600 acres are recommended for the designation of a restricted access hunt area within the Sharonville State Game Area. The area, proposed for designation as the Pierce Road Unit, would remain open to the public for recreational activities except during posted Special Hunt Opportunities. During Special Hunt Opportunities, the Department recommends that the hunt area be open only to deer hunters with disabilities who have been drawn for a permit and their accompanying companions, defined as "operators."

The Department proposes that hunters with disabilities, who are successful in the application process, be able to designate up to three "operators" to accompany them on the hunt. The Department recommends that at least one designated operator must be at least 18 years of age and possess a license, other than an apprentice license, to hunt deer or a certificate of completion of training in hunter safety. The operator(s) must be able to come to the immediate aid of the permittee and maintain uninterrupted, unaided visual contact.

The Department recommends that applicants who participate in Special Hunt Opportunities meet at least one of the following qualifications:

- Possession of a Department issued permit to hunt from a standing vehicle;
- Documentation as a veteran with 100 percent disability as defined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Documentation, as a resident, by the United States Department of Veteran's Affairs as individually unemployable;
- Declaration as legally blind, as defined by section 1 of 1978 PA 260, MCL 393.351; or
- Possession of a Department issued permit to hunt using a laser sighting device.

For the 2015 deer season, the Department recommends establishing Special Hunt Opportunities during the following dates:

- September 19 and 20, 2015 (coinciding with the Liberty Hunt)
- October 15-18, 2015 (coinciding with the Independence Hunt)
- October 1-7, 2015 (coinciding with the first week of archery deer season)
- November 15-30, 2015 (coinciding with the regular firearm deer season)

Neighboring States

The Department polled natural resources professionals in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin to determine whether these states offer any special hunting opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

- Illinois: Hunters with disabilities are offered the "10-day rule" where qualifying hunters with disabilities are exempt from a license. However, qualifying hunters must apply for a permit for the site where they wish to hunt and the type of game to pursue. After they have received their permit, they must call the site 10 days prior to the hunt date so accommodations can be made. Not all sites offer special hunting events for disabled hunters, but all Illinois DNR-managed sites that offer hunting will make reasonable accommodations for hunters with disabilities.
- Indiana: There are no special seasons for disabled hunters.
- Iowa: A qualified resident with disabilities may be issued one general deer license to hunt during the youth season (September 20- October 5) with a bow, shotgun, or muzzleloader. The hunter must apply and obtain a general deer license permit from the Department.
- Kansas: The youth deer season and deer season for hunters with disabilities (September 6-14) is combined. Hunters must have a valid deer permit. In addition, hunters with disabilities may apply for a Disability Assistance Permit. The permit allows a designated, licensed person to assist in pursuing and dispatching an animal wounded by the disabled permit holder. Kansas allows special hunts on public areas traditionally closed to hunting. A hunter with disabilities must apply for a special hunt.

- Kentucky: There are Wildlife Management Areas that are designated for individuals with physical disabilities.
- Minnesota: Hunters with disabilities may be granted special hunt permits. There are Wildlife Management Areas that are only open to special disabled hunts, and special hunts in other Wildlife Management Areas that are open for individuals with disabilities only (from November 9-17). In addition, the Lac qui Parle Game Refuge has a portion blocked off to hunting with signs posted "State Wildlife Sanctuary - Do Not Trespass," except for permitted participants in disability hunts or with special authorization. The Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge and the Sandstone National Wildlife Refuge have a special deer hunt for persons with disabilities from October 3-6.
- Missouri: There are public access sites that offer accessibility for hunters with disabilities. The Department is currently working to remove barriers that prevent people with disabilities from enjoying the outdoors. Construction of new facilities and renovations at older properties are providing more access. There is an online atlas that a hunter with disabilities may use to find an accessible area.
- Ohio: Permanently and totally disabled veterans who receive pensions or compensations due to their service-related injuries and who are Ohio residents must apply in writing for a free hunting license. Portions of Deer Creek, Killdeer Plains, Resthaven, Lake La Su An, Berlin Lake, Big Island, Delaware, Grand River, Brush Creek, Waterloo, Cooper Hollow, East Fork, Woodbury, Spring Valley, and Fallsville wildlife areas are open for persons with severe mobility impairments to drive their cars, trucks, or an electric powered all-purpose vehicle to designated interior areas for hunting.
- Wisconsin: The 2015 disabled deer hunt will be held October 3-11 at properties where sponsors have enrolled their properties. Hunters must possess authorization to shoot from a vehicle or a disabled hunting permit to be eligible. This gives the opportunity to hunt either sex deer statewide during any firearm deer season. In buck-only areas, hunters with disabilities are allowed to harvest a limited number of antlerless deer.

Biological

From 2011-2013 there were between ~280 – 460 deer taken annually during the Independence Hunt. Due to the limited scope of the Special Hunt Opportunities in the Pierce Road Unit, no biological impact is expected.

Social

Many hunters who will qualify to participate in the Special Hunt Opportunities have complicated health histories that may require special staffing, frequent health care appointments, and sudden medical emergencies. Creating more opportunities for uninterrupted and supported hunts may help to increase hunter success rates and satisfaction. In addition, allowing a permittee to designate up to three operators is intended to increase support for the hunter and satisfaction.

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Allowing qualifying participants in these hunts to take either antlered or antlerless deer may result in some social conflict communicated by individual hunters to field staff and through electronic formats.

Economic

There may be some local benefit to surrounding businesses during Special Hunt Opportunities, such as restaurant and hotel sales. No significant economic impact is expected publicly. The Department expects some administrative costs associated with signage and permit administration.

Recommendation:

This order is being submitted for information and consideration. This item appeared on the Department's June 2015 calendar and may be eligible for approval on August 13, 2015.



Russ Mason, Ph.D., Chief
Wildlife Division



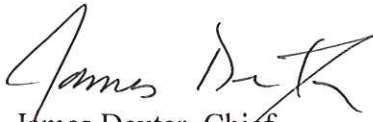
Gary Hagler, Chief
Law Enforcement Division


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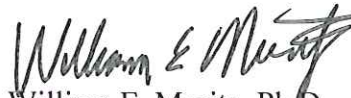
Bill O'Neill, Chief
Forest Resources Division



Ronald A. Olson, Chief
Parks and Recreation Division



James Dexter, Chief
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William E. Moritz, Ph.D.
Natural Resources Deputy

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER

Amendment No. 7 of 2015

By authority conferred on the Natural Resources Commission and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources by sections 40107 and 40113a of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.40107 and 324.40113a, it is ordered that effective August 14, 2015, the following section(s) of the Wildlife Conservation Order shall read as follows:

13.1 Managed state game areas and wildlife areas listed.

Sec. 13.1 The managed state game areas and wildlife areas are the Allegan state game area (Highbanks unit, Fennville farm, Ottawa marsh, and Bravo unit) - Allegan county; Crow island state game area (east and west units) - Saginaw and Bay counties; Fish point wildlife area - Tuscola county; Grand Haven state game area - Ottawa county; Lapeer state game area - Lapeer county; Maple river state game area (wetlands wildlife management units near highway US-27) - Gratiot county; Munuscong wildlife area - Chippewa county; Muskegon state game area - Muskegon and Newaygo counties; Nayanquing point wildlife area - Bay county; Pointe Mouillee state game area - Wayne and Monroe counties; Portage marsh - Delta county; **Sharonville state game area (Pierce road unit) - Jackson county**; Shiawassee river state game area - Saginaw county; St. Clair flats wildlife area (Harsens island unit, Dickinson island unit and St. John's marsh unit) - St. Clair county; Sturgeon river sloughs wildlife area and Baraga

13.2 Unlawful acts.

Sec. 13.2 A person shall not do any of the following on any managed state game or wildlife area listed in section 13.1:

(1) Enter any lands or waters posted "wildlife refuge - do not enter" without written permission of the management unit supervisor or their representative.

(2) On managed waterfowl areas as defined in section 3.419, hunt in or occupy any hunting zone, area, post, or blind, other than designated on the permit issued to the person by the department, or hunt beyond such distance as may be specified for that blind or post.

(3) Hunt or shoot from any dike, trail, safety zone, or retrieving zone posted against such use.

(4) Hunt in designated retriever dog zones or areas without a retrieving-type dog as an individual or with a party.

(5) On managed waterfowl areas as defined in section 3.419, leave the area without returning their hunting permit and submitting all game taken for examination, unless directed to do otherwise by a posted sign or by instructions printed on their permit to hunt.

(6) Trap on any area posted "state game area - hunting by permit only" or "wildlife refuge - do not enter" in zones 2 and 3 without a permit from the management unit supervisor or their representative.

(7) Use dogs for hunting or retrieving in areas posted against such use.

(8) Enter any lands posted "permit required for access and hunting on dates posted" without a department issued permit.

13.18 Sharonville state game area; Pierce road unit definition, rules.

Sec. 13.18 The following rules are established on those portions of the Sharonville state game area, Jackson county, posted "designated Pierce road unit - permit required for access and hunting on dates posted" being portions south of Sharon valley road in section 36, T03S R02E and sections 1 to 2 of T04S R04S:

(1) The management unit supervisor or their representative may designate special hunt opportunity days for the Pierce road unit during any deer hunting season.

(2) During designated special hunt opportunity days as posted by the department, all access to the Pierce road unit is prohibited without a permit. This subsection shall not apply to authorized employees and designated agents of the department performing official job responsibilities.

(3) An individual wishing to participate in restricted hunting days shall be eligible to apply for a permit if one of the following applies:

(a) The individual possesses a department issued permit to hunt from a standing vehicle.

(b) The individual is a veteran with 100 percent disability as defined by the United States department of veterans affairs. Documentation from the United States department of veterans affairs indicating 100 percent disability shall be in the possession of a veteran participating in restricted hunting days.

(c) The individual is a resident rated by the United States department of veterans affairs as individually unemployable. Documentation from the United States department of veterans affairs indicating an individually unemployable rating shall be in the possession of a veteran participating in restricted hunting days.

(d) The individual is blind as defined by section 1 of 1978 PA 260, MCL 393.351.

(e) The individual possesses a department issued permit to hunt using a laser sighting device.

(4) Permits for special hunt opportunity days may be issued to qualifying individuals chosen in random drawings. Permits shall not be transferred or altered.

(5) During the special hunt opportunities, a qualifying permitted hunter may designate up to three accompanying operators. "Operator" means an individual who accompanies the permitted hunter during the special hunt opportunity days. The operator(s) shall be capable of providing immediate aid to the permitted hunter and shall maintain uninterrupted, unaided visual contact with the permitted hunter. At least one operator in the hunting party shall be 18 years of age or older and shall possess a valid license to hunt deer, other than an apprentice, or a certificate of completion of training in hunter safety.

(6) A qualifying permitted hunter participating in special hunt opportunity days shall possess a deer license, deer combination license, or an antlerless deer license valid for deer management unit 038. A qualifying permitted hunter may take one deer during the period for which the permit is valid. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this order, during the restricted hunting days, a deer license or deer combination license is valid for either an antlered or an antlerless deer.

(7) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this section, all regulations of state law and this order regarding the taking, possession, transportation, and storage of deer during a deer season shall apply to an individual participating in special hunt opportunity days.

Issued on this 13th day of August, 2015.

Approved as to matters over which the Natural Resources Commission has authority.

John Matonich, Chairman
Natural Resources Commission

Approved as to matters over which the Director has authority.

Keith Creagh
Director